

12-1-1972

## Toying with the Environment and the Poor: A Report on the Stockholm Environmental Conferences

Norman J. Faramelli

Follow this and additional works at: <http://lawdigitalcommons.bc.edu/ealr>



Part of the [Environmental Law Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Norman J. Faramelli, *Toying with the Environment and the Poor: A Report on the Stockholm Environmental Conferences*, 2 B.C. Env'tl. Aff. L. Rev. 469 (1972), <http://lawdigitalcommons.bc.edu/ealr/vol2/iss3/2>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Law Journals at Digital Commons @ Boston College Law School. It has been accepted for inclusion in Boston College Environmental Affairs Law Review by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Boston College Law School. For more information, please contact [nick.szydlowski@bc.edu](mailto:nick.szydlowski@bc.edu).

# TOYING WITH THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE POOR: A REPORT ON THE STOCKHOLM ENVIRONMENTAL CONFERENCES

*By Norman J. Faramelli\**

## INTRODUCTION

Over the past few years the global dimensions of the ecological crisis have become increasingly apparent. Although most environmental problems have been caused by the affluent or industrial nations, all nations have been affected. No comprehensive solutions are possible for the rich nations without having severe repercussions on the poor ones. Such an awareness led to the first United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE).

During the first two weeks of June, 1972 Stockholm was an environmental smorgasbord. The main entree—UNCHE—was accompanied by a host of alternative or parallel courses. The latter included an Environmental Forum (sponsored and funded by the Swedish government), the People's Forum (under the auspices of Swedish leftist groups), an international Dai Dong conference, Pow-Wow (promoting alternative technologies), as well as an environmental analogue to Woodstock—a group of American counter-culturists on the Hog Farm outside Stockholm. Some interaction and even hostility was evident between these diverse groups. For instance, the well disciplined and politically oriented Swedish left denounced the American counter-culturists because of their marijuana smoking and misguided politics. To the Swedes, the Hog Farm looked like a CIA plot to divert young people from the real social and political issues.

In addition to conferences, there were numerous meetings, displays, exhibits, films, etc., including, among others, Japanese victims of mercury and cadmium poisoning, American Indians from

the Black Mesa, and Lapps in Northern Scandinavia, all victims of "progress." But Stockholm was also swarming with top level corporate executives from the United States, Japan and Europe. Perhaps the future of the global environment will be most significantly affected by the unpublicized private meetings between American oil company officials and the delegates from the Third World nations.

The following is an attempt to (a) describe the events of UNCHE and the accomplishments, (b) analyze the basic ecological issues discussed in Stockholm (particularly with regard to both the developed and less developed nations), and (c) pose a challenge to the academic, environmental and religious communities concerning the need for visions of a new industrial order.

#### THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

The U.N. Conference lived up to expectations. Although there were many accomplishments, the delegates reached consensus and acted only on relatively minor environmental issues. Although environmentalists in Stockholm expressed hope that UNCHE would "rise above" politics in order to deal with the urgency of the ecological crisis, such was not the case. The nationalism of the delegates was stronger than either their ideologies or their environmental interests.

Many participating nations had skeletons in their closets that they did not want examined in Stockholm. For example, the United States did not want ecocidal warfare on the agenda; Japan did not want to discuss a ban on whaling; Brazil tried to sabotage resolutions on forest conservation and on environmental responsibilities to neighboring countries (Argentina); and France and China voted against a ban on nuclear testing. National interests were indeed paramount.

The UNCHE chairman, Maurice Strong, did an excellent job in gaining full participation of the poor nations in Stockholm. When the conference was first proposed, it first appeared that the poor nations would boycott it, since they claimed that ecology is a problem for industrial nations, not the poor ones. Thanks to Strong's skillful efforts, plus the U.N. report *Development and the Environment* (the Founex report), some of their suspicions were allayed.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, UNCHE was not quite an international conference. The United States and Great Britain were instrumental in keeping the Eastern European nations from attending. Their efforts to exclude East Germany as a participant led to a sympathy boycott of UNCHE by the U.S.S.R., Poland, Bulgaria, Romania and Czechoslovakia. Hence, one fourth of the industrial world—most of the Eastern European nations—was absent.

### *The United States Delegation*

Although the U.S. did not publicly play a leadership role, its influence was seen throughout. From the early planning stages, the U.S. was determined to deal with only “feasible” or “practical” issues. That is, the United States wished to achieve results only on minor subjects (such as pollution monitoring) that did not threaten current American practices. American pragmatism was much in evidence and most members of the American delegation, including Russell Train and Senator Baker, were pleased with the outcome of UNCHE.<sup>2</sup>

Although there were some capable people in the U.S. delegation, the entire group was muzzled before they went to Stockholm, and basically stayed muzzled during the two weeks. The Americans were ordered by the State Department not to endorse any resolutions that would cost the U.S. money, such as any increase in foreign aid. Many policy decisions were made by State Department officials directly in touch with the White House, and these actions were not always synchronized with those of the delegates.

The U.S. delegation appeared to be on the defensive during most of the conference. The U.S. did not want to be attacked as it had been at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in Santiago, Chile earlier this year.<sup>3</sup> When Sweden's Prime Minister Olaf Palme indirectly attacked the U.S. for its ecocidal warfare in Viet Nam, Russell Train, chairman of the U.S. delegation, and State Department official Charles Bray objected to the “gratuitous politicizing of our environmental discussions.” That is to say, Sweden was playing dirty politics. The U.S. delegation seemed unprepared for the attacks made on ecocidal warfare, but still skillfully managed to keep that issue off the UNCHE agenda. After this first overreaction, all further responses came directly from Washington in order to avoid the exacerbation of international tensions. Ironically, and perhaps not

coincidentally, while the U.S. delegation was debating its new environmental involvement in the U.N., the U.S. Congress, at the President's request, was slashing American contributions to the U.N.

The defensive posture of the U.S. was not only seen in answering attacks on ecocidal warfare, but also in the work sessions. For example, on June 6, Committee II urged UNCTAD to investigate the possibility of substituting natural materials for synthetics. That move would not only aid the development of the Third World, but would also cut down significantly on many polluting synthetic industries. The recommendation was approved 57-1, the U.S. being the lone dissenter. In another instance the U.S., this time in a minority of four, voted against the concept of "additionality" or compensation to developing nations for economic hardships incurred because of environmental control measures.

#### CHINA

At Stockholm the People's Republic of China attended its first U.N. conference and probably had the best attendance record of all the delegations. On several occasions the Chinese delegates attacked the "superpowers," "capitalism," "imperialism," etc., and repeatedly protested U.S. activities in Southeast Asia.<sup>4</sup>

In the first week of the UNCHE China emerged as the leader of the Third World nations. China challenged successfully the prefabricated Declaration on the Human Environment because of its glaring omission of the causes of the ecological crisis and the issues of global development. In its ten-point alternative declaration, China said:

We hold that the major root cause of environmental pollution is capitalism, which has developed into a state of imperialism, monopoly, colonialism and neocolonialism—seeking high profits, not concerned with the life or death of people, and discharging poisons at will. It is the policies of the super powers that have resulted in the most serious harm to the environment. The United States has committed serious abuses in Viet-Nam, killing and wounding many of its inhabitants.

These points were widely acclaimed, but some nations were reluctant to support the strong ideological stance. Another part of the Chinese declaration, however, influenced the entire proceedings at UNCHE:

Every country should be entitled to utilize and to exploit its resources for its own needs. We resolutely oppose the plundering of resources in the developing countries by the highly developed countries.

Some of China's support from Third World nations withered when the nuclear testing ban was discussed. China maintained the problem was not the testing of the weapons but the weapons themselves. The Chinese tried unsuccessfully to work for a resolution on the abolition of all nuclear weapons. Their vote against the nuclear test ban, however, was not well received by some of the African nations.

Unfortunately, China spent little time at the U.N. sessions telling of its rural industrial experiences which have been viewed by many as models of ecological excellence. At one of the People's Forums on Chinese Technology the Chinese delegation said that a people's technology is one planned around people where the masses, not machines or profits, are the prime assets. Technology must be adapted to people, not *vice versa*, a simple truth often ignored by Western nations. At an Environmental Forum Chinese delegates spoke of their efforts to develop industrially without urbanizing and told how Chairman Mao's teachings were used as the basis of their rural development program.

### *Accomplishments of UNCHE*

Was UNCHE a success? The answer to that question depends entirely upon one's expectation level. For some rabid environmentalists who expected the U.N. to rise above politics, the conference was a dismal failure. For those who were not especially concerned with the outcome, but rather with the mere feat of gathering a host of differing nations to discuss ecology, UNCHE was a great success. But it became obvious that neither ecology nor any other issue could rise above politics when handled by a political body.

One of the specific accomplishments of UNCHE was a revised Declaration on the Human Environment. After the attacks by China and others during the first week it looked as if no declaration would be forthcoming, but at the eleventh hour a document was agreed upon. The concerns of China and other Third World nations clearly influenced the revisions. For example, Principle 9 of the Declaration stated:

old	new
Environmental deficiencies generated by the conditions of underdevelopment pose grave problems and can best be remedied by and in the course of development.	Environmental deficiencies generated by the conditions of underdevelopment and natural disasters pose grave problems and can be remedied by accelerated development through the transfer of financial and technological assistance as a supplement to the domestic effort of the developing countries and such timely assistance as may be required.

In addition, several new principles were added. For example, Principle 10 stated:

For the developing countries, stability of prices and adequate earnings for primary commodities and raw materials are essential to environmental management since economic factors as well as ecological processes must be taken into account.

It is clear that the developing nations viewed development as a major environmental problem.<sup>5</sup>

Much to the chagrin of some of the existing U.N. agencies, a new U.N. environmental agency was established. It is to be funded with \$100 million over a five-year period, with the U. S. contributing 40%.

In addition, UNCHE approved some 200 recommendations that will be sent to the U.N. General Assembly for adoption. Among them were:

- a ban on ocean dumping that should be in effect before 1975;
- a convention prohibiting the pollution of the seas with toxic waste;
- a call for an end to all nuclear weapons testings (France and China voted NO, the U.S. abstained);
- at least 100 pollution monitoring stations, with 10 others located in unpolluted areas;
- an international register on the production and use of substances toxic to the environment, and another on radio-active pollution (a strong clause was added and passed over the objections of the U.S.);
- a program to study the carcinogenic, teratogenic and mutagenic effects of different substances;

- increased controls of toxic agents in food products;
- compensation for trade losses resulting from environmental measures (opposed by the U.S., Britain and Japan);
- steps to improve information on ecological subjects, making it available even to illiterate and semi-literate persons;
- the creation of a gene bank to assure the continuing existence of flora and fauna (beneficial insects and microorganisms);
- an urgent call on the International Whaling Commission to declare a ten-year moratorium on whaling (The Whaling Commission has already disregarded this one);
- a world register on rivers still unpolluted;
- a study of the world's energy resources to be completed by 1975;
- a U.N. study on the possible advantages of replacing synthetic products with natural ones;
- the development of a system for international planning of natural resources management;
- the preparation of a global map outlining high risk areas of soil destruction;
- the elimination of toxic agents in agriculture;
- measures for preventing water shortages;
- the formulation of international standards on noise pollution;
- a special housing fund providing seed capital for the planning and management of human settlements;
- measures to control marine resources;
- U.N. surveillance of lakes and rivers shared by several countries;
- government programs on population control (although UNCHE did not spend much time on population issues).

Some of the resolutions, even if adopted by the U.N. General Assembly, will be only morally binding. This, however, is not without consequence.

Dai Dong, Pow-Wow and others who published a pamphlet prior to the Stockholm conference entitled *Don't Trust the U.N. Conference* saw little during the two weeks to change their minds. Substantive issues such as limits on economic growth and on whom such limits should be placed were never discussed at UNCHE. The hope that the U.N. could rise above political considerations proved to be utterly naive. Addressing the Environmental Forum on the last day of the conference, Barry Commoner indicated that the more trivial the issue, the more consensus and enthusiasm expressed by the U.N. delegates. According to Commoner and others at the Environmental Forum, the most significant issues, in order of priority, were:



- a redistribution of natural resources;
- the cessation of processes that might have irreversible consequences to the biosphere;
- the curtailment of toxic emissions into the biosphere;
- the measurement of those emissions;
- a study on any of the above subjects.

UNCHE tried to avoid the first two, and when they were discussed the language was meek and mild. UNCHE, however, placed strong emphasis on the last two. Some sardonically mentioned that the U.S. and other industrial nations attempted to reduce the ecological crisis to a simple case of more studies and pollution monitoring. In a word, most affluent nations were more eager to measure poisonous emissions than to curb them.

#### THE REAL ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

The most serious issues related to social justice and the ecological crisis were not debated at UNCHE, but did come under extensive discussion at other conferences such as the Environmental Forum. Three of the major issues were population, the doomsday reports, and the relationship between ecology and social justice.

#### *Population*

The population issue was avoided at UNCHE for two reasons. Many nations (especially those of the Third World) did not want to discuss it; furthermore, the U.N. is planning a population conference in 1974.

Americans and others familiar with the Commoner-Ehrlich debate felt at home at the Environmental Forum. In his opening address Commoner gave a forceful statement on the need for social justice, but also articulated his argument against population control, stating that new technologies, not too many people, are the source of the ecological crisis in the U.S.<sup>6</sup> Commoner stated that the achievement of the increase in environmental quality attainable by a 30% improvement in technical efficiency, would require a reduction in world population by 85%.

Paul Ehrlich found himself on the platform with many Third World participants. They attacked him bitterly for his statements on the need to impose population control programs on the Third World. Ehrlich repudiated his earlier writing by saying, "the U.S. Government is too irresponsible to impose any program on any-

one." His retraction, however, did not lessen their attacks. A panelist from Kenya read a passage from one of Ehrlich's later works which stated that Kenya should not be allowed to develop, but should instead purchase its manufactured products from industrialized nations, and that Kenya should maintain its game preserves as a tourist attraction where weary citizens from industrial societies could go for relaxation. Ehrlich's failure to recognize the dependency issues related to development was startling, as Third World spokesmen were quick to point out.<sup>7</sup>

Many Third World delegates and participants in Stockholm admitted that population was a problem, but they claimed that it was a self-correcting problem with the advent of more development. They argued that the higher the standard of living, the lower the resultant procreation rate. Above all, Third World delegates were not looking to the developed nations for solutions. Charges were made repeatedly that some U.S. foreign aid had been diverted from development to population control programs. They were also highly resentful of reports funded by the Rockefellers bemoaning the population explosion in the poor nations. "It's your machines, not our people, that cause pollution," they said. Third World delegates further opposed the new World Bank regulations that favor, through loan programs, nations with effective birth control programs.

All statements on population equilibrium, optimum population, and reduced population were attacked by Third World spokesmen. Well aware of current power alignments, one said: "If population is reduced by 50%, we know which half is going."

Due to sensitivities and ideological ramblings of the critics of population control, and the inept defenses by the advocates of control, the population issues were not adequately discussed anywhere in Stockholm. The naive political stance of many of the advocates of population control seemed to indicate an insensitivity to the totalitarian or coercive aspects of the remedies they recommended. In reaction, the more extreme Third World spokesmen erroneously spoke of the population explosion as nonexistent.

The results of the population discussions can be summarized as follows: the population problem of the Third World must be defined by the Third World itself. No programs designed by the affluent can be successfully superimposed. The Third World representatives are more than willing to discuss population among themselves; the question of "who says what to whom and in what

context" is all important. If one wants to increase communication between the advocates of environmental quality and the advocates of social justice, the population issue is not the way to begin. The political implications and the past history of population control measures are simply too explosive. Discussions on population must avoid the "haves" telling the "have nots" to have fewer children. Such efforts will be seen as "genocidal," and are ultimately self-defeating. Population control efforts among the poor (at home and abroad) will be much more effective if the poor themselves see population as a problem and are provided the means to enact the programs they deem necessary.

### *The "Doomsday Reports"*

At the Environmental Forum presentations were made on the Club of Rome's *THE LIMITS TO GROWTH* and the British *BLUEPRINT FOR SURVIVAL*.<sup>8</sup> These reports are not messages of abject hopelessness, but warnings that if current trends are not reversed eco-catastrophe will result. Although environmentalists from industrialized nations applauded them, both reports were poorly received by the Third World representatives and many leftists from industrialized nations.

For Americans accustomed to Keynesian economists attacking *THE LIMITS TO GROWTH*, it was refreshing to see new attacks from the left. The M.I.T. document was seen as an "elitist" and "technocratic" plot supporting a corrupt and "imperialistic capitalist system." *THE LIMITS TO GROWTH*, they said, was not concerned with social justice, but alluded to redistribution solely as an afterthought. Many of the attacks came from Marxists who were critical of the notion of natural limits because it revealed so little faith in technology (a criticism not unlike that of the Keynesians). Many critics were as against *THE LIMITS TO GROWTH* as the earlier Marxists were anti-Malthusian. The critics, however, seemed unaware of the vicious attacks made by capitalists and their supporting economists on *THE LIMITS TO GROWTH* in the U.S.<sup>9</sup>

The case for either of the two "doomsday reports" was not assisted by the presentations made on their behalf. *THE LIMITS TO GROWTH* was presented by members of the Club of Rome, but none of the M.I.T. technicians who developed the model were present. *BLUEPRINT FOR SURVIVAL* was presented by one of its co-authors who spoke of the need for the enlightened few planning

for the incompetent many. Questions of redistribution and social justice were dismissed as "petty bickerings" over ideological differences. All the representatives from the Third World, ranging from radicals teaching in the U.S. to the less radical U.N. delegates, shared the same concerns. All vigorously opposed any scheme that would perpetuate the current levels of inequality. If limits to economic growth are needed because of ecological constraints, environmental quality must not be achieved at the expense of the poor. Underdevelopment, not overdevelopment, is their problem and the fixing of global incomes at the present poverty levels is morally reprehensible.

As a result of the Stockholm encounters, one issue became clear. The growth-no-growth framework is an unhelpful formulation of a complex problem. Economic growth is an index for certain physical realities and transactions. It can occur in polluting or non-polluting sectors. It seems clear that unless there are some marvelous technical solutions, economic growth in the polluting sector will have to be slowed down. But there are a variety of other ways that economic growth can be achieved. The question is not whether an economy will grow or stagnate. The crucial question is whether it will grow in harmony with the limits of natural resources and the ability of the biosphere to absorb pollution.

The positive role that economic growth has played in many societies cannot be overlooked or minimized. It is true that economic growth does not always bring justice, as industrialization has often widened the gap between the rich and the poor within a given country. But economic growth has usually been a precondition for improvements in social welfare. The social, economic and political structures would have to be radically transformed in order for social justice to be attained in a society with no economic growth and economic equilibrium. Such transformations, if possible at all politically, are not about to occur within the next twenty years. Thus redistribution should not be spoken of glibly as if it were easy to achieve. Nevertheless, the need for progress toward economic equilibrium cannot be ignored.

Above all, the redistribution issue and its problems cannot be considered as an afterthought, but must be an integral part of all serious ecological discussions. It must be dealt with if the conclusions of the "doomsday reports" are essentially correct, and I think they are. All of us need to learn to deal with natural limits and

plan accordingly. The Marxist analysis also needs to be updated and liberated from the technical optimism that is characteristic of most industrial societies, communist and capitalist.

*Social Justice and Ecology*

It became evident at UNCHE and the surrounding conferences that ecology cannot be considered above politics simply because industrialized nations deem it the most pressing issue. For the Third World nations in Stockholm, development and environmental quality can be used interchangeably. For many nations the real ecological problem is the lack of development and the persistence of poverty. These poor nations are skeptical of environmental issues because they see them as diversions from other more pressing social concerns. They made clear repeatedly at UNCHE and elsewhere in Stockholm that they will not accept limitations on economic development if such measures work to perpetuate the present levels of injustice.

After the failure of the rich nations to make concessions to the poor at UNCTAD III, the refusal of the U.S. to support a feasibility study of substituting raw materials from the Third World for synthetics, and the rejection of the "additionality" principle by some major economic powers, it became clear to the poor nations that global development will not occur through the generosity and magnanimity of the rich. The poor nations must take the initiative in their own liberation struggles. They will incur the opposition of the rich nations, and cannot count on their assistance, as they break the yoke of economic domination.

Despite these grave problems the UNCHE took some small steps forward. As a result of Stockholm the poor nations' fears that the environment would be an excuse for controlling development were somewhat allayed. Prior to Stockholm, they feared that rich nations would divert money now earmarked for foreign aid to internal environmental control problems. They feared that trade would be restricted because of the adoption of recycling practices by the rich nations who would therefore purchase fewer raw materials from them. They also feared that rigid new pollution control measures in the rich nations would increase product prices and make it more difficult for the poor nations to purchase products from abroad. Finally, they were afraid that the new environmentally-sound technology transferred to them would be too ex-

pensive for them, or even worse, that the rich nations would use the poor nations as dumping grounds when they were prohibited from polluting at home.

It would be unfair to say that the relationships between ecology and development are not better understood after Stockholm. Hence, any appraisal must be realistic and appreciative of the fragility of the U.N., and must not underestimate its progress. The change made in the Declaration of the Human Environment to reflect the concerns for development and social justice were not insignificant, even if they were inadequate. Hopefully, as a result of UNCHE, development and social justice will not be separated from environmental discussions.

Nevertheless, the real questions of ecology and social justice, concerning the limits of natural resources and the limits of the biosphere to absorb pollution, the long range effects of exponential growth of rich nations on the global ecology, coupled with the dynamic processes of technology, economic domination, aid, trade, etc., that make the rich richer and the poor poorer, were scarcely touched at UNCHE. Despite some progress, UNCHE toyed with both the environment and the needs of the poor.

The message of the Third World participants was unmistakably clear, although the emphasis varied. On the whole, the U.N. delegates from the Third World were less militant and less critical of current industrial patterns than were others from the Third World. But again, the delegates came largely from those groups that have been the beneficiaries of technological progress in their countries. The more militant spokesmen repeatedly attacked exploitation and imperialism, and challenged the model of Western style industrial development on the grounds of both ecology and social justice.

A recent U.N. report showed how rapid industrial development has not assisted the bottom 40% in many countries.<sup>10</sup> The development causes a forced urbanization program where the peasants are driven from the countryside to the outer edges of urban areas, and are forced to live in an unemployed squalor worse than their previous state. It is increasingly clear that current patterns of industrialization are causing exploitation of both nature and people, as in Brazil where the Amazon forests and the Indians are both seen as "obstacles" to development which have to be eliminated.

Thus, a new industrial style that leads to a more equitable dis-

tribution of wealth and income, as well as environmental quality, is essential. Global ecological constraints such as those in *THE LIMITS TO GROWTH* will make that both more difficult and more necessary. Redistribution must not be an afterthought as it has been in many ecology discussions in the U.S. (Incidentally, if growth stops, the United States itself will have to redistribute.) Additionally, it is imperative that the cultural, economic and political sources of maldistribution be understood and new programs be developed that can overcome the major obstacles to redistribution. Only then can development lead to economic justice.

The conference in Stockholm reaffirmed the seriousness of the ecological crisis. Nevertheless, ecology as defined by industrialized nations cannot become the single predominant issue. Treated in this fashion, the poor at home and abroad will suffer and pay the costs. The poor, however, seem to overestimate the depth of the ecological concerns of the affluent nations. The practices of rich nations do not come close to their environmental rhetoric. In reality, ecological commitment is not draining the few resources earmarked for the poor. In a basic sense, however, the two issues are inextricably related because the exploitation of people and the environment often go together as seen in Appalachia, Black Mesa, and Lapland. It is often the same cultural values and institutional arrangements that cause both the ecological crisis and social and economic injustice.<sup>11</sup> Today, despite the rhetoric, neither the environment nor the poor are being taken seriously. Minor cosmetic reforms and minor modifications to the present industrial system will be grossly inadequate to change the patterns. What is needed is the fundamental transformation of political and economic institutions and the cultural values of affluent societies.

#### THE CHALLENGE OF STOCKHOLM

Two points raised repeatedly in Stockholm must be clearly understood. First, although the ecological crisis is caused primarily by the rich nations, all nations suffer directly and indirectly. In the theme of UNCHE, there is "Only One Earth."<sup>12</sup> Many of the cities in Third World nations have the same pollution problems as cities in industrial societies. Although the ecological crisis is everyone's crisis, the presence of poverty and underdevelopment constitutes the biggest environmental problem for the poor nations.

Second, neither the ecological crisis nor global poverty is amenable to a simple technical solution because each such solution introduces a new set of problems. Consider the production of electrical energy from fossil fuels or nuclear power. Presently, poor nations sell their fossil fuel resources to the rich. When the fuel source expires, the rich nations will turn to nuclear power plants. A trend toward expensive nuclear power plants will work against the poor, since capital-intensive investments favor the rich. In order to procure advanced technologies, the poor nations will have to borrow more from the rich and thus increase their economic dependency. This is an issue that technical optimists often ignore.

For many who attended, the Stockholm experiences led to new moral perceptions. Given our political and economic institutions, inability to cope with either the ecological issue or the issue of equitable development, and given the serious international repercussions if these problems are not attended to, morality may be pragmatic for the first time in recent history.

Appeals to self-interest, even if enlightened, are simply inadequate. The new industrial imperialism does not require the labor of the poor nations as it once did. In the next several decades, it may be in the self-interest of the rich nations to exterminate the poor. It is also in the short term self-interest of governments and economic institutions to rape the environment because these structures do not plan for posterity. A new pragmatic ethic based on human and natural concerns needs to be developed. Robert McNamara of the World Bank and Gunnar Myrdal, the Swedish social scientist, have both called the moral argument a means to combat global maldistribution.<sup>13</sup>

With the present patterns of technological development, the gap between the rich and the poor nations is rapidly widening. The poor nations are incurring horrendous debts and have been economically dominated by the affluent. But just because the current world-wide economic growth has not helped the poor appreciably, there is no reason to assume that the poor nations will be helped by curbing growth. In fact, if global growth needs to be limited because of environmental constraints, the plight of the poor with respect to the rich will worsen. Despite the political difficulties in achieving the global redistribution of resources, wealth, and income, this is the only way to achieve equity.

In order to cope with such complex issues it is urgent that an ambitious program of study and organization be developed.



First, there is a need to understand the dynamics of both the ecological crisis and global poverty, along with their interrelationships. It is not accidental that the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer; the market system is designed to do exactly that. Thus it is inadequate to deal simply with the symptoms of either ecology or poverty; it is essential that we understand and correct the root causes. That is why a systematic analysis is absolutely necessary.

Second, there is a need to develop alternative visions of what global development would look like if it were designed to maximize social justice and environmental responsibility. It is an exceedingly difficult task because there are few viable models in existence. But it is imperative that we learn from the experiences of Tanzania, China, Ceylon, Cuba, and other nations that are experimenting with new forms of social and industrial organizations without romanticizing them. It is necessary that we develop alternative visions of the industrial future and shape ethical criteria by which one alternative can be selected over another.

Third, unless visions are translated into reality, they soon become illusions. It is essential that we deal with the questions of how do we get from here to there. Whether or not we like this starting point in history is irrelevant; it is our point of departure. Many visions become illusions because the people who conceive them refuse to accept the realities of the current predicament.

In order to deal with these problems it is essential that we understand the role of economic institutions, especially the large multinational corporations. New ways must be found to guide and control these structures so they can develop industrial patterns that are both socially and environmentally sound. If such a function is impossible, then we must find ways to constrain them and to develop alternative economic institutions. In any case, the trend toward economic concentration should be reversed and steps should be taken toward economic democracy and economic pluralism. Deconcentration is not a panacea for the ecological crisis and global injustice, but it needs to be further investigated.<sup>14</sup>

It is incumbent upon religious institutions, universities, and private groups concerned with development and the environment to understand the global significance of these problems, even if they have local, regional, and national manifestations, and even if they seem almost intractable to world-wide solutions. These groups must promote discussion and work to build constituencies that will

have a new consciousness of a new global industrial order. And that new consciousness must lead to appropriate action, to social justice and environmental quality simultaneously. To understand these global relationships, the structural or institutional—social, economic, and political—must be linked with the personal and the communal. For example, affluent societies need new life styles as well as the transformation of structures.

This is the challenge that Stockholm posed to citizens and institutions in affluent societies. The enormous complexity and overwhelming nature of these issues cannot be denied. It is little wonder that many citizens are retreating from such issues to those that are more manageable and personally centered. But a warning should be heeded by all those who fancy withdrawal to the more simple life. Ignoring these large, complex problems does not lead to their solution, because there are no self-correcting mechanisms at work. Failure to deal with these issues only insures that the current policies of inequity and environmental destruction will be continued in the future. Only by dealing creatively with these issues can the quality of life for all be improved.



## FOOTNOTES

\* Director, Boston Industrial Mission, Cambridge, Mass.; Member, Religious Task Force on the Global Environment, Stockholm.

<sup>1</sup> Founex Report, *Development and Environment*, in DOCUMENTS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT, PART II, 288-360 (Washington, D.C.: Dept. of State, 1972); also available as a separate document from the U.N.

<sup>2</sup> These impressions were garnered at several meetings of the Religious Task Force on the Global Environment with the U.S. delegates to the conference.

<sup>3</sup> See, THIRD SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT, TAD/481 (New York: U.N. Office of Public Information, 1972).

<sup>4</sup> At one session, an attack on U.S. ecocidal policies in Viet Nam was greeted by a response from Le Van Loi of South Viet Nam who charged: "Communist China is actually responsible for the war of aggression and of destruction in Viet Nam." Incensed at the attack by a "puppet clique," the Chinese delegation walked out of the session.

<sup>5</sup> Compare, preliminary *Declaration*, in DOCUMENTS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT, *supra* n.1, with the final version, in ENVIRONMENT—STOCKHOLM (Geneva: Centre for

Economic and Social Information, 1972). The latter document contains an excellent summary of the proceedings at UNCHE.

<sup>6</sup> See, Speech by B. Commoner, *The Meaning of the Environmental Crisis*, Environmental Forum, Stockholm, June 5, 1972. His major argument can be found Commoner, B., *THE CLOSING CIRCLE* (New York: Knopf, 1971).

<sup>7</sup> See, Ehrlich, P., *POPULATION, RESOURCES AND THE ENVIRONMENT* (San Francisco: Freeman, 1970); Ehrlich, P., *HOW TO BE A SURVIVOR* (New York: Ballantine, 1971). An example of the Commoner/Ehrlich debate can be found in *ENVIRONMENT* (April, 1972).

<sup>8</sup> Meadows, D., *et al.* *THE LIMITS TO GROWTH* (New York: Universe Books, 1972); *Blueprint for Survival*, *THE ECOLOGIST* (January, 1972).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Ross, Passell and Roberts, *New York Times Book Review*, April 12, 1972. See also Passell and Ross, *Don't Knock the Two Billion Dollar Economy*, *New York Times Magazine*, March 5, 1972.

<sup>10</sup> *ATTACK ON MASS POVERTY AND UNEMPLOYMENT*, ST/ECA/162 (New York: United Nations, 1972).

<sup>11</sup> Faramelli, *The Manipulative Mentality*, in Sherrel, ed., *ECOLOGY: CRISIS AND NEW VISION* (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1971); Faramelli, *Perilous Links Between Economic Growth, Justice and Ecology: A Challenge for Economic Planners*, 1 *ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS* 218 (1971).

<sup>12</sup> See, *ENVIRONMENT—STOCKHOLM*, *supra* n.5; Ward, B. and R. Dubos, *ONLY ONE EARTH* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1972).

<sup>13</sup> See, Speech by R. McNamara, *Development in the Developing Nations: The Maldistribution of Income*, in *VITAL SPEECHES*, June 1, 1972; Myrdal G., *Political Factors in Economic Assistance*, *SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN* (April, 1972).

<sup>14</sup> New industrial institutions must be more compatible with the biosphere than the present institutions. Hence, new ecologically sound technologies are needed. See, Rossman, *Technology and Social Change*, in *ECOLOGY: CRISIS AND NEW VISION*, *supra* n.11; van Dresser, *A LANDSCAPE FOR HUMANS* (Albuquerque, N.M.: Biotechnic Press, 1972); Bookchin, *Toward a Liberatory Technology*, in Benello and Roussopoulos, ed., *THE CASE FOR PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY* (New York: Viking, 1971); and Todd, *The Third Alternative*, in a forthcoming issue of *HARPER'S*. See also the materials of the New Alchemy Institute (East) of which Todd serves as director. The Institute is developing a technology that is in harmony with the psychic and biological processes.